

### **REMARKS**

The objection to claim 10 has been noted, and the claim amended so that it now depends from independent claim 6.

Claim 6 has been amended to clarify that coiling of the continuous intermediate strip to form an intermediate coil of a specified weight is without subjecting said continuous intermediate strip to any cutting.

Reconsideration of the 35 U.S.C. 103(a) rejection of claims 6-8, and 12 and 13 as being unpatentable over JP 59092103 is requested. The claims are patentable over the teaching of the reference for reasons as are given below.

Claim 6 recites that a continuous cast precursor strip of a complete casting sequence is rolled in a first deformation stage to form a continuous intermediate strip, and coiling the continuous intermediate strip without subjecting said continuous intermediate coil to any cutting form an intermediate coil having an intermediate coil weight comprising at least 40 tons. The result of these steps is that the complete casting sequence is rolled in a second deformation stage in a single continuous strip length form as distinguished from the prior art practice of second stage deformation rolling of individual strips cut from a first deformation stage rolling of a longer length strip. In addition, by not cutting the continuous intermediate strip formed of the complete cast into plural strips incident coiling, it is a continuous length strip rather than plural lesser length strips that is coiled. This eliminates the disadvantage of having to thread in plural strips to the coiler and the limiting effect such has on coiling speed.

Claim 6 further recites that the intermediate strip is uncoiled from the intermediate coil and rolled through a second deformation stage to form a finished strip, and additionally that following the second deformation stage rolling, a plurality of finished coils are

produced from the finished strip by coiling the finished strip and severing the finished strip into sections having a desired finished coil weight after said step of rolling the continuous intermediate strip through the second deformation stage.

The rejection of claim 6 fails to recognize and consider the express limitation of the claim dealing with the coiling of the continuous intermediate strip without subjecting it to any cutting, the key difference between the claimed invention and the prior art.

JP 59092103 discloses that a casting machine slab is passed through a rolling mill 3A forming a sheet bar which sheet bar is cut into lengths with cutter 4A, the cut lengths being coiled and accumulated at a, e.g., accumulation point 5A. The several individual lengths, after uncoiling, are then are fed from point 5A in succession through a second rolling mill 2B. Each individual strip passing from rolling mill 2B is sectioned with a second cutter 4B and then wound in coil form of a "standard" size.

JP 59092103 in requiring two strip cuttings, i.e., a cutting after first deformation and before coiling individual strips into coils SC1, and then another cutting after a second strip deformation teaches away from claim 6. Claim 6 in requiring coiling the continuous intermediate strip without a cutting thereof proscribes what the reference teaches.

JP 59092103 also fails to suggest to a person of ordinary skill in the art the claim 6 requirements of coiling the continuous intermediate strip without cutting to form an intermediate coil or said step of severing the finished strip into sections having a desired weight after rolling the continuous intermediate strip in the second deformation stage.

A continuous precursor strip of a complete casting of continuous casting plant becomes the intermediate strip and this complete casting sequence output is rolled as a whole in first and second deformation stages without any cutting to lesser lengths taking place.

JP59092103 on the other hand, takes an output from a casting plant and turns it into cutup portions of that output right after the first deformation and before coiling thereby creating the disadvantage and problems associated with having to introduce ends of plural strips into the coiler.

Accordingly claim 6 is not disclosed or made obvious by JP 59092103 and should be allowed.

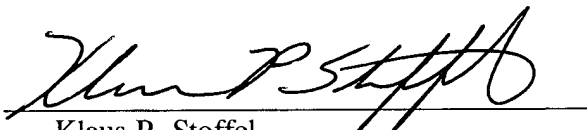
Claims 7, 8 and 10-13 depend from allowable claim 6, and are allowable for the same reasons that claim 6 is allowable.

A further action allowing the application is solicited.

It is believed that no fees or charges are required at this time in connection with the present application; however, if any fees or charges are required at this time, they may be charged to our Patent and Trademark Office Deposit Account No. 03-2412.

Respectfully submitted,

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

In the claims:

6. (Three times Amended) A process for producing hot-rolled steel strip from a continuously cast precursor strip, comprising the steps of:

receiving, at a first deformation stage having at least one roll stand, the continuous precursor strip of a complete casting sequence directly from a continuous casting plant in which the continuous precursor strip is produced;

rolling the continuous precursor strip through the first deformation stage to form a continuous intermediate strip;

coiling the continuous intermediate strip without subjecting said continuous intermediate strip to any cutting to form an intermediate coil having an intermediate coil weight comprising at least 40 tons;

uncoiling the continuous intermediate strip from the intermediate coil to supply a second deformation stage having at least one roll stand;

rolling the continuous intermediate strip through the second deformation stage to form a finished strip;

producing a plurality of finished coils from the finished strip by coiling the finished strip and severing the finished strip into sections having a desired finished coil weight after said step of rolling the continuous intermediate strip through the second deformation stage; and

changing the metallurgical characteristics of the continuous intermediate strip and said step of rolling the continuous intermediate strip through the second deformation stage.

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10. (Twice Amended) The process of claim [1] 6, wherein said step of changing the metallurgical characteristics comprises using a flexible speed control.



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